



PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Public Health Association of Australia Media Awards

The winners of the Public Health Association's annual Media Awards for excellence in the coverage of public health issues have been announced at the association's 34th Annual Conference in Adelaide.

In declaring the winners South Australian Health Minister, Hon. Lea Stevens, said the mass media, of all forms, has a significant role to play in protecting and promoting the health of Australians.

"The Public Health Association's Media Awards are aimed at promoting and improving the media's understanding of public health policy, measures and approaches. The aim is to challenge media reporters to think about public health beyond the provision of illness care in hospitals," she said.

Print Award

The award for the print category was won by Mr Brett de Vine, the Senior Editor *Northern Territory News* and *Sunday Territorian*, for a series of articles on pool fencing in the Northern Territory. There has been an on-going debate in the Northern Territory over the past few years about the introduction of mandatory isolation pool fencing legislation to address the high rates of childhood drowning and near drowning in the Northern Territory. Childhood drowning has been the leading public health issue in the Northern Territory for over a decade and rates of drowning and near drowning were, in 2000, three times higher than the rest of Australia.

During January to June 2002, the *NT News* and *Sunday Territorian* published a series of articles on childhood drowning and pool fencing standards in the Northern Territory. This intensive series of articles was instrumental in raising the public's awareness of this sensitive issue. It generated community debate that in turn put pressure on the Government to review and revise pool fencing legislation.

The sustained nature of the news coverage (nine front page article, 15 articles, two editorials, numerous letters to the editor, on comprehensive 2 page special report and one community survey), meant that the issue did not fade from public consciousness. The coverage was both factual and passionate and created an atmosphere that allowed the Chief Minister and her government to act.

Television Award

The television category was awarded to Miranda Eastman from Channel Seven, *Today Tonight* in Perth for the work undertaken in profiling nutrition options for West Australians on a low income.

In January 2002, *Today Tonight* identified that some single mothers were struggling on low budgets and could not afford to buy food for their children. After consultation with the Department of Health, they chose to run with a story on supporting people on a low income to eat healthy foods by profiling foods that are value for money and value for health.

Today Tonight used extensive promotions of the story in the lead up to the screening ensuring good exposure for the story and the Food Cent\$ program. Supermarket tours were coordinated to follow the story.

Since then, *Today Tonight* has further demonstrated their support of the Department's nutrition messages and ran further stories about the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Eberhard Wenzel (Online) Media Award

The Eberhard Wenzel Media Award, is awarded for the best online news, special features and/or discussion forum on a public health issue. It has been named in Eberhard Wenzel's memory and is recognition of Eberhard's unique public health online forum.

This year the Eberhard Wenzel Media Award is bestowed on Professor Neil Thomson for the Australian Indigenous Health *InfoNet*. The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet aims to contribute to improving the health of Australia's Indigenous people by facilitating the sharing and exchange of relevant, high-quality knowledge.

In the four and a half years since the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet was established, it has emerged as the major source of knowledge and information about the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As part of its Knowledge Management work, the HealthInfoNet is a world leader in knowledge translation research, which focuses on the utilisation by potential users of the results of pure and applied research. This research involves analysis of data and other information obtained from academic, professional, government and other sources, and also some primary data collection and analysis.

The HealthInfoNet shares knowledge and information with policy makers, health service providers, academics, researchers, students and the general community. It also facilitates knowledge sharing and exchange by publishing an electronic peer-reviewed journal, operating a list serve, providing an information service and including on its Internet site an electronic notice-board for details of courses and other pertinent information.

**For more information or interview, please contact
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